



*The Tragedy Assistance
Program for Survivors
presents*

Coping With Casualties

800-959-TAPS (8277)

www.taps.org



“There is no more effective way of creating bitter enemies for the Army than by failing to do everything we can possibly do at a time of bereavement. Nor is there a more effective way of making friends for the Army than by showing we are personally interested in every fatality which occurs.”

Army Chief of Staff George C. Marshall



“In the first hours and days, the military will make either an adversary or an advocate for life in the family of those who have died in service to their country.”

Captain Lee Youngblood, wife of pilot killed at Nellis AFB



TAPS Mission Statement

TAPS is the national non-profit Veterans Service Organization made up of, and providing support to, ***everyone*** who has lost a loved one serving in the armed forces.





The TAPS Family



TAPS is a family,
coming together to
remember the love
and celebrate the
life of those we
have lost, and share
our journey to find
comfort and
healing.



TAPS helps heal...

★Peer support

Those who have lost a loved one in the armed forces, including the National Guard and Reserve, whether in a duty status or not, are part of the TAPS national survivor network. These family members and friends share their pain and fears in a supportive environment and help each other heal.





TAPS helps heal...



★ **Peer support**

★ **Grief and Trauma
Information and Resources**

TAPS is a member of the Association of Death Education and Counseling and the Association of Traumatic Stress Specialists, able to offer information about the very best bereavement resources in America, wherever military families may relocate after a loss. TAPS also is a partner of the VA Vet Centers for grief and trauma counseling for ALL family members.

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TAPS helps heal...



★ **Peer support**

★ **Grief Resources**

★ **Crisis Intervention**

A network of trained crisis response professionals is on call in each state 24 hours a day through 1-800-959-8277. They bring a wealth of compassion and experience to critical incident stress and trauma, and are there to help survivors understand the reactions they are having to their sudden loss.

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TAPS helps heal...

- ★ **Peer support**
- ★ **Grief Resources**
- ★ **Crisis Intervention**
- ★ **Case Work Assistance**

Working hand in hand with Casualty staffs to bring administrative problems back into the system so that they do not become emotional issues.





Information TAPS provides

- ☆ Who we are and what TAPS is all about
- ☆ Death in the Armed Forces – why it is different than other losses in our society (factors that lead to “complicated mourning”)
- ☆ Grief – how we grieve, and how to effectively offer comfort to others
- ☆ Caregiver stress – how to take care of yourself while you are caring for others
- ☆ Resources available to you in a casualty case – TAPS, DOD, VA, and other agencies/organizations



Why losing a loved one in the military is **DIFFERENT**

- ★ Death Notification and Military Burial – these can be so tough
- ★ Living Overseas and moving within 180 days – you gain an immediate support system through TAPS
- ★ Benefits are complex – TAPS is there to help navigate the bureaucracy
- ★ Loss of lifestyle -- the military is a culture and a commitment – TAPS becomes our new military family
- ★ Tremendous pride in loved one's service – we share this bond





Understanding Grief

★ **The Four Tasks of Grief**

- Accept the reality of the death
- Experience the pain of grief
- Adjust to the environment in which the deceased is missing
- Form a new identity and reinvest energy
without forgetting the past





What can you say?



- ★ “I’m very sorry.”
- ★ “You have our support. Call on us.”
- ★ “This is a great loss to the organization/nation.”
- ★ “_____ will be greatly missed.” Use the name.
- ★ Offer choices and listen to requests.
- ★ Remember – Honor the dead by *focusing on the life and the service.*
- ★ DIGNITY FIRST, COMPASSION ALWAYS



What shouldn't you say?



- ★ I know exactly how you feel -- *only if really you do!*
- ★ It's God's will -- *does God really work like this?*
- ★ He is in a better place -- *but I want him here!*
- ★ At least they didn't suffer -- or -- At least they're out of their misery -- *how do you know this?*
- ★ At least you have other children -- *you cannot compare!*
- ★ At least you're young -- *so I have decades to face alone?*
- ★ It could have been worse -- *not if the outcome was death!*
- ★ God doesn't give us more than we can handle -- *but I can't handle this!*



Words to avoid

- ★ Bereaved adults are *traumatized*, they are not *mentally ill*.
Be careful with medications and counseling
- ★ Acceptance -- *this feels “unacceptable”*
- ★ Goodbye – *they live forever in our hearts*
- ★ Closure – *you never “close” them out of your life or forget the life and the love*
- ★ Loss – *they are not “lost”, they have died*
- ★ Move past this – *you can’t force healing*
- ★ Get on with life – *Life is forever altered*
- ★ Get over it – *“it” is not something you “get over”, you must find comfort and peace within and then, somehow, create a new future.*



Companioning-

How YOU can help those who are grieving

by Dr. Alan Wolfelt

- ★ Companioning is about honoring the spirit; *it is not about focusing on the intellect.*
- ★ Companioning is about curiosity; *it is not about expertise.*
- ★ Companioning is about learning from others; *it is not about teaching them.*
- ★ Companioning is about being present to another person's pain; *it is not about taking away or relieving the pain.*



Companioning



- ★ Companioning is about discovering the gifts of sacred silence; *it is not about filling every painful moment with talk.*
- ★ Companioning is about listening with the heart; *it is not about analyzing with the head.*
- ★ Companioning is about bearing witness to the struggles of others; *it is not about judging or directing those struggles.*
- ★ Companioning is about going to the wilderness of the soul with another human being; *it is not about thinking you are responsible for finding the way out.*



*TAPS honors our fallen
servicemembers by ensuring
that the loved ones they may
leave behind are not forgotten.*



*Together, we can help
each other heal.*

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